# I Lost Something in the Hills by botanicapoetica

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**Summary:**

If you'd asked Steve why he was at one of Tommy H's parties, even though he hated the asshole, and even though he'd had other options, he couldn't have told you. Maybe part of him just wanted to do some normal teenager things again before throwing himself into adulthood, maybe he didn't even need a reason. Except the reason became abundantly clear the moment he stepped inside and followed the sounds of cheering.

# I Lost Something in the Hills

**Author's Note:**

> This is the start of a maybe small maybe large 'verse surrounding my fic Call & Respond, please share your thoughts and thank you!

If you'd asked Steve why he was at one of Tommy H's parties, even though he hated the asshole, and even though he'd had other options, he couldn't have told you. Maybe part of him just wanted to do some normal teenager things again before throwing himself into adulthood, maybe he didn't even need a reason. Except the reason became abundantly clear the moment he stepped inside and followed the sounds of cheering.

Billy was standing in the middle of the kitchen chugging a bottle of whiskey as every idiot in the vicinity clapped and whooped. Steve watched him throw the bottle into the floor, hard, and laugh in a way that made Steve's stomach flip uncomfortably. The other boy was swaying where he stood, a painfully wide smile on his face, which was in stark contrast of the rest of it. Billy had a gnarly black eye, an ugly and deep purple smudging underneath, and some kind of cut on his neck. Steve stalked over to him, trying to catch eye contact but finding it hard until suddenly Billy seemed to take his presence in.

"Harrington! At a party! What a surprise!" The other boy bellowed, his smile still plastered on his face in a way that reminded Steve of the porcelain dolls he'd seen in Nancy's house once. Steve opened his mouth to say something but was interrupted by someone handing Billy a beer, and waited with furrowed brows while Billy chugged it down without stopping.

"Hey, man, are you alright? How much have you been drinking?" Steve asked, trying to go for casual but knowing his babysitter face was showing. He watched as Billy's face changed, a shadow passing over him as he leaned forward to say "Never quite enough, Harrington." into his ear. Steve didn't know what to do with that, didn't like the implications, and reached his hand out only to have Billy twirl away from his attempt and disappear into the crowd.

He spent the first half an hour trying to track Billy down, catching glimpses of his hair or jacket at times but never getting a good enough look. After that Steve decided to try and relax; Billy was a big boy, they could talk about it later. He spent time making small talk and jokes with some school acquaintances, trying to enjoy these last few moments of freedom while he could, until people began to properly trickle out of the party.

Steve walked out the front door, twirling his keys on his finger, and spared a look around, his eyes falling on a slumped figure in the grass to the side of Tommy's house. He knew that leather jacket anywhere, and ran a hand through his hair as he walked over, preparing himself for some giggling idiot version of Billy to talk too loud at him again. When he got to Billy, however, he got none of that.

Billy was laying on his back, his chest rising and falling a little too slow for Steve's liking, eyes heavily closed. Steve knelt down by him, putting a hand on his cheek to pat him softly, but received no response. As he was turning to make sure his keys were still in his pocket he felt movement and turned around in time to see Billy's body jerking, stilted noises coming from him, eyes still firmly closed. He watched as Billy's body turned to the side, watched him throw up a startling amount and begin jerking again, feeling like his heart was going to explode.

"Billy, BILLY, fuck. C'mon, don't do this. Billy please try to sit up for me, I have to get you to the car, we have to go to the hospital." Steve said, trying to be as level sounding as he could, knowing he was failing. Billy seemed to be feeling the same way because Steve watched his eyes snap open, wide and unseeing, as he threw up several more times. He came up gasping, tears running down his face and fear plain in his eyes. "H-help, Steve, what..."

Knowing Billy was too muscular and too pliant to stand or be carried, Steve settled for hoisting Billy under his armpits and started dragging him backwards toward his car, trying not to panic at the sound of Billy crying uncontrollably. He sounded terrified, far more scared than Steve had ever heard him be. They'd gotten closer, were actual friends now, and Billy slowly but surely worked up to talking to Steve about the fears he had at home. But this wasn't fear, it was terror, and Steve was thankful when his survival instincts kicked in. He

needed to get Billy to the hospital, he needed to get him there, to keep him safe.

Buckling Billy in as carefully as he could, he peeled out of Tommy's driveway in the direction of the hospital. When he looked over at Billy, he wasn't moving, his chest barely rising. Steve reached out, grabbing a handful of his shirt, and shook him as hard as he could. "BILLY. HEY, you gotta stay awake." He bellowed, heaving a sigh of relief at the sight of Billy's eyes fluttering open. He watched Billy turn toward him, his expression vacant, his eyebrows slowly drawing together. "Where're we goin', Stevie?" Billy slurred, his eyes not quite landing on Steve's even though it looked like he was trying. "We're going to the hospital Billy, we're only a few minutes away, you're gonna be fine."

Billy's eyes quickly welled up again, his head shaking back and forth desperately as he tried in vain to grab on to Steve, his limbs too slow and heavy to land right. "Nnno, Steve, please. Just...take m'home. No hospital. Please, no hospital, he'll kill me, Steve."

Steve recalled the last time he'd heard one of the Hargroves say that to him, and found his reaction the same. "Max said him and Susan were out for the weekend. Is Neil gonna be home, Billy?" Steve said, watching the other boy shake his head erratically again. "Okay, okay Billy." He quickly stopped the car, flipping it around to head for Billy's house, and the motion must've rattled Billy because Steve saw him throw up again, not missing himself at all this time. Steve continued steering with one hand, using the other to rub at Billy's back and push his hair away from his face, finding himself unable to give a shit about his stupid car.

By the time they pulled into the driveway Billy seemed to be done throwing up, his back shaking with exhaustion. The sound of a car that was decidedly not Billy's roaring Camaro speeding into the driveway must've been foreign to Max because Steve found himself looking at her from her spot on the porch as he walked around to the passenger side. "He's harmless right now, Max. But he's fucked up and said no hospital." He said by way of explanation, opening the passenger door and hoisting Billy by his armpits again, surprised when a small pair of hands quickly joined his. Steve looked at Max, seeing a child with eyes too old for her age, watching her look down

at Billy’s face with her mouth set in a serious line.

Steve didn’t know what to say and Max didn’t seem inclined to speak so they merely walked shoulder to shoulder, pulling Billy up through the threshold and toward the couch. Max didn't seem to want to stop there, though, and shoved at Steve to keep moving. "Bathroom. Gotta clean him up." She said shortly, her lips barely moving as she clearly exerted all the possible strength she had to lug her brother into the bathtub. Steve sat down heavily on the tile, feeling useless and tired as he watched Max reach for the bottom of Billy's shirt. Before she could hike it over his head, Billy seemed to come back to them, guilt washing over his face. "M'sorry, Maxine. Di'nt mean to, m'sorry Maxine." he croaked, sniffling and lazily pawing for her hand, missing again. "Told you not to call me that. Just lay back. Steve, help me with his boots. Pants too." She said, her tone still clipped but her expression softer than Steve had ever seen it. Steve leaned forward and yanked Billy's boots off while Max took off his shirt, watching her throw it out into the hallway with a scrunch of her nose. Billy's complete lack of protest at Steve and Max yanking his inconveniently tight jeans off and leaving him laying prone in a bathtub with just his boxers on concerned Steve, but it paled in comparison with how terrified he'd been of Billy's state earlier. He watched Billy's eyes trail Max as she grabbed a wet towel and fall on Steve as she started to wipe his face, and it was like watching a parade balloon collapsing. There was none of the usual rage left in him, just weariness.

"Scared the shit outta me back there, Hargrove. You can't do shit like this, what would've happened if I hadn't found you? What if you hadn't woken up?" Steve said, not failing to notice the fearful edge creeping into his voice. He didn't know what he expected in response, but it wasn't this. Billy started laughing, his head flopping back to rest on the edge of the tub, shoulders quaking as his laughing got louder and more hysterical. Steve looked at Max, perplexed and unnerved, but her chin was wobbling and her eyes were staring at some blank part of the bath. She closed her eyes tightly and Steve watched her set the towel down and use her now free hand to rest it on top of Billy's heart. Billy's laughing continued, but was getting higher, his eyes on the ceiling, and Steve couldn't fucking stand the sound. He moved to sit on the edge of the tub, about to lay into Billy

about scaring the shit out of his sister, but the sounds of his laughter were quickly devolving into crying, and Steve watched Billy's face turn ugly with grief. Steve reached his hand out to grab on to one of Billy's and couldn't think of anything to say, but he could hear Max whispering quiet assurances. Maybe just to Billy, maybe to both of them.

He took them anyway.

**Author's Note:**

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